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# LETTERS

FROM

ACADEMICUS TO EUGENIUS:

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AT A TABLE

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

LONDON:

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MDCCLXXIII.

LETTER



ERRATA.

- Page 3. Line 2. after *together* place a Semicolon.  
20. last Line, for *bona* read *bonas*.  
21. ——— 6. for *se* read *re*.  
23. The Greek Quotation wrong printed.  
28. Line 9. for *As* read *All*.  
45. ——— 3. for *he* read *Ham*.

[ 8 ]

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LETTER I.

DEAR EUGENIUS,

I AM now left to contemplate alone in the sweet groves and delicious retreats of my beloved *Alma Mater*. I can say, however, as it is reported Scipio Africanus was wont, *that I am never less alone than when alone.* As I am passionately fond of reading and writing, I find employment in these for almost every hour of the day: here also I often revolve in my mind some philosophical subject

or another, that we have discoursed upon when together.

In cloysters dim, far from the haunts of folly,  
With freedom by my side, and soft-ey'd  
melancholy.

As I have a good deal of leisure at present, I purpose giving you my thoughts in writing on one or two of those subjects about which we have differed so widely in opinion.—I have been in college almost all the summer, as you know I am particularly pleased with retirement. Sweet, certainly, are its uses. The mind unencumbered with the cares of life, and free from the troubles attendant upon society, can then exert all its powers in speculation.

We



We hereby come to that best of knowledge, the knowledge of ourselves, and by placing us, as it were, above the world, it makes all its follies and absurdities conspicuous: by this we come to that serene hill of wisdom, from which, the Roman poet tells us, we look down with pity on those erring mortals who have strayed from the true path of life.

Despicere unde queas alios, passimque videre  
Errare, atque viam palantes quærere *vita*.

I feel the loss of company less than formerly, as a disgust to the world increases upon me every day. *Man is an animal*, as Swift says, *that,*  
3 *upon*

upon the whole, I perfectly detest, though I may love Peter, John, and Thomas. The knowledge I have had of the world, though little, convinces me that every one who lives in it ought to act on this principle—To believe every man a villain till he has proved himself honest, not as the law says, to believe him innocent till he is found guilty. We are indeed rogues by nature.—To this retreat, therefore, I fly when misfortunes have vexed me, or the villainies of mankind have made me soured with the world. My dear *Alma Mater* then takes me in her arms, and like a tender and affectionate mother, expels or mitigates all  
my

my cares, and gently sooths me into tranquillity. My books afford me, in the words of the latin author, *inter prospera ornamentum, inter adversa refugium.*

—It is for these reasons that I prefer this melancholy place, as you call it, to any other ; and I swear to you by the immortal souls of those great genius's, whose productions have subjected new regions to the empire of learning, and who whilom contemplated in these groves, that one day of literary solitude here, is to me worth an hundred spent elsewhere in irrational dissipation,

I am your's, &c,

ACADEMICUS.

my career, and only look at me  
into the future. The books  
are not in the hands of the  
learned, but they are in the  
hands of the people. It is for their  
benefit that this history is written, so  
you will be able to see the  
truth of the matter. The history of  
the world is a long and tedious  
task, and it is not for the  
faint-hearted. It is a task that  
requires a great deal of time and  
effort, and it is not for the  
faint-hearted. It is a task that  
requires a great deal of time and  
effort, and it is not for the  
faint-hearted.

LETTER II.

ON THE

PROBABILITY

OF THE

MONARCHY OF GREAT BRITAIN

SOON BECOMING ABSOLUTE.

Nulla est natio quam pertimescamus : omnia  
sunt externa terrâ marique pacata : intus insidiæ  
sunt : intus est hostis : cum luxuriâ nobis, cum  
âmentia, cum scelere certandum est,

CICERO, Oratio 2. in Lucium Catilinam.



# CHAPTER II.

ON THE

PROBABILITY

OF THE

MONARCHY OF GREAT-BRITAIN

SOON BECOMING ABSOLUTE.

IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND, BY  
A MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.  
LONDON: Printed by J. JOHNSON, in Pall-mall.  
1790.

## L E T T E R II.

DEAR EUGENIUS,

**I** Make no doubt but that the monarchy of Great Britain will soon be absolute, if there is not an interposition of the people in favour of liberty. One might maintain this without a just imputation of temerity, as well as that a person who lived in continual debauchery and intemperance, would soon impair his health, and render his body infirm. We are really in a dangerous situation. We have a prince upon the throne, who is actuated by the counsels of men

who seem determined to effect a subversion of the constitution. He has a large standing army, and two houses of parliament, at his command. I would not be thought, however, to mean that he himself had ever planned such a scheme ; his attention has been engaged in other studies : he has dedicated his time to the elegant arts, and philosophical amusements.

Men of little wit, and less discernment, generally ridicule those as enthusiastical politicians, who talk of the impending ruin of the liberties of their country : They cannot see the storm that is gathering above them, and  
— will

will readily burst upon their heads, and therefore they despise it. One might however affirm, that the liberty of the constitution would soon be invaded, without disgracing the cool and unimpassioned judgment which dignified a Machiavel or a Montesquieu. The latter great man does indeed tell us, in his most excellent Treatise of the Spirit of Laws, that as all human things have an end, the beautiful system of the English government will one day perish. He says that it will perish when the legislative power shall become more corrupt than the executive. As for my part, I cannot conceive how the legislative power can be more

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corrupt

corrupt than at present. The methods of corruption that have been used to procure seats in the house of commons, are so well known, that it is not necessary to enlarge upon them. The greatest part of those who procure them, have scarce any other intention than to enrich themselves as much as possible in the trade of selling the liberties of their country to the sovereign. He, therefore, has an obedient parliament, (as there is always, with the bishops and Scotch peers, a corrupt majority for the ministry in the House of Lords) to vote what he pleases, and a loyal army to enforce their vote.—The sovereign, though he is not deeply  
read



read in the science of politics, is pleased with every new encroachment, that is made for him upon the freedom of the people. The increase of power is as agreeable to a prince, as the augmentation of his hoard to an avaritious man, or the enjoyment of women to a young man.—Where, then, in such a dilemma, must we seek for relief? It is no where to be found but in the virtue of the people. Doctor Blackstone does, indeed, tell us, in contradiction to Montesquieu, that the liberties of England will not perish, as those of Rome, Sparta, and Carthage have been lost, because we are not strangers, as they were, to the trial by Jury. This, he  
seems

seems to look upon as a bulwark, that neither time nor the effects of power can throw down. In my opinion, however, the doctor has made too hasty a conclusion; for we must consider that those countries had as strong bulwarks of liberty, which corruption at last demolished. We seem *hastening* to that stage of corruption, in which the Roman historian finely tells us, his country was plunged, after Carthage had been reduced, and other great nations had been conquered. *Primo pecuniæ, dein imperii cupido crevit. Ea quasi materies omnium malorum fuere. Namque avaritia fidem, probitatem, cæterasque artes bona subvertit, pro his superbiam,*

*cru-*

*crudelitatem, Deos negligere omnia venalia habere edocuit : ambitio multos mortales falsos fieri subegit ; aliud clausum in pectore, aliud promptum in lingua habere, amicitias inimicitiasque, non ex se sed ex commodo aestumare, magisque vultum quam ingenium bonum habere. Hæc primo paulatim crescere, interdum vindicari. Post ubi contagio, quasi pestilentia, invasit ; civitas immutata, imperium ex justissimo atque optimo, crudele intolerandumque factum.* When we shall have fully arrived at this profligacy of manners, I should think that the trial by jury would not stand firm against the attacks of the crown. The doctor himself

D

self tells us, that in Sweden the trial by jury, that bulwark of northern liberty, which continued in its full vigor so lately as the middle of the last century, is now fallen into disuse, and that there, though the regal power is in no country so closely limited, yet the liberties of the commons are extinguished, and the government degenerated into a mere aristocracy. Why then may we not infer from this, that the trial by jury will be abolished here, and that our government will in time degenerate into an absolute monarchy? It seems more than probable that this will be the case, for it is tending with hasty strides to that degeneracy.

We

We have already seen how much some of the Stuarts have perverted this method of trial to the disadvantage and oppression of the kingdom. We may, therefore, fairly conclude that such stretches of power may be again put in practice, and in contradiction to \* Dr. Blackstone, say, that

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\* This is one amongst the *innumerable* absurdities that are to be found in the Commentaries on the Laws of England. The author speaks of the *murder* of Charles the 1st. It is not his wish, that in the words of Homer, *ως απολοι το και αλλος, οσις τοιαυτα γερеси*. He pretends to ridicule Locke, (whom, in some cases, he has unfairly quoted) for saying that the people have a right to resume that power which they have trusted in the hands of one man, when they find that he has made a bad use of it.—He



that the trial by jury is not a sure infallible defence of the liberty of the English constitution.

It has been frequently urged, in opposition to these arguments, that the people of England can never be enslaved, that there will be always virtue enough in them

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asserts that the dissenters are very little better subjects than papists, and ought scarcely to be more tolerated. In the passages on this subject, in the words of an elegant writer, he seems to have used *declamation without argument, and violent censures without dignity or moderation*. The best cure for the poison contained in these books, is to be found in a Letter to the author by the great Dr. Priestly, and in a tract addressed to him by Mr. Furneaux. No young man who reads the Commentaries on the Laws of England, should be unacquainted with these publications.

them to check the movements of arbitrary power, and to curb the insolence of that monarch who should be bold enough to proceed upon them. This, they say, appears not only from the spirit of liberty shewn in former times, but from the glorious appeal they made to heaven in Charles the first's time, and their depriving James the second of his crown. But we must consider in how different a manner they made an attack upon the freedom of the constitution, from what has been attempted in the present times. Those two monarchs openly avowed their intention of infringing the liberties of the people: they endeavoured, in the face of  
day,

day, to subdue a castle that was invincible by mere force. A wiser plan is now adopted of undermining it, and its very foundations begin to totter.

—Captique dolis, lachrymisque coacti,  
Quosneque Tydides, nec Larissæus Achilles  
Non anni domuere decem, non mille carinæ.

We must consider that those kings had to deal with an uncorrupted, the present, with a venal parliament. It is also certain that the exorbitance of such a national debt as ours (amongst other causes) restrains the virtue of a nation. Dr. Price, a sagacious and intelligent writer, tells us, in his late Appeal to the Public, on the subject of the national debt, *that nothing, in*  
*his*

his opinion, can be more replete with mischief to a free people, than such a debt as ours. He says, it exposes us to foreign enemies, by making us fearful of war, and to domestic enemies, by making us fearful of the consequences of opposition to arbitrary measures. Indeed, continues he, I look upon the public creditors as little better than a band of pensioners to the government, and it is more than probable, that had the nation been encumbered with our present debts in the reign of Charles the first, or James the second, the former would never have lost his life, nor the latter his crown. Dr. Blackstone also, speaking of the influence of the crown, says, The frequent

*frequent opportunities of conferring particular obligations, by preference in loans, subscriptions, tickets, remittances, and other money transactions, will greatly increase this influence, and over those persons whose attachment, on account of their wealth, is most desirable. As this is the natural, though, perhaps, the unforeseen consequence of erecting our funds of credit, and to support them establishing our present perpetual taxes; the whole of which is entirely new since the restoration in 1660, and by far the greatest part since the revolution in 1688. And the same may be said with regard to the officers in our numerous army, and the places which the army has created.*

*All*



*All which put together gives the executive power so persuasive an energy, with respect to the persons themselves, and so prevailing an interest with their friends, as will amply make amends for the loss of external prerogative.*

Our ministers of late have been unwilling to diminish this great debt, on account of the influence which is thereby given to government. Instead, therefore, of the sinking fund being appropriated by compound interest to discharge the immense debt of the nation it is put out to \* simple  
E interest,

\* The difference between simple and compound interest, is inconceivable to a person who has not considered the subject. It is almost infinite.—*Vide* Dr. Price, on the National Debt.

interest, and the debt remains nearly the same. But what is it that they have not dared to do? They have not only in this instance, but in several others, wantonly trampled on the most sacred laws; and when we have complained at the injustice, they have added insult to oppression. In such a case there is only one method to put a stop to their career. I mean,—by an appeal to heaven. Though this, perhaps, might produce greater inconveniencies than any we could suffer from their tyranny. But if such a circumstance were to happen, I can only say, (as every true Englishman ought) that,

that, *Manus hæc inimica tyrannis,*  
*this hand, an enemy to tyrants,*  
 shall not be inactive.

I am your's, &c.

ACADEMICUS.

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that I have been thinking of  
writing you for some time  
but have not been able to find time

I am yours, &c.

ACADEMICUS

2

Y

# LETTER III.

## OBSERVATIONS

### ON THE

First Chapter of GENESIS, and some  
other Parts of the OLD TESTAMENT;  
with some general Remarks on the  
NEW TESTAMENT.

Nil tam temerarium tamque indignum sapientis  
gravitate atque Constantiâ, quam quod non satis  
exploratè perceptum sit & cognitum, sine ullâ  
*dubitatione* defendere.

CICERO de Naturâ Deorum.

Φωνᾶντα συνετοῖσιν. ἐς

Δὲ τὸ πᾶν ἐρμηνεῶν χατίζει.

PINDAR, Olymp. II.



# LETTER III.

## CONSERVATIONS

### ON THE

THE Chapter of Genesis, and some  
other parts of the Old Testament;  
with some general Remarks on the  
New Testament.

By the same Author.

London: Printed by J. Baskett, in Pall-mall.

1734.

Printed by J. Baskett, in Pall-mall.

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## LETTER III.

DEAR EUGENIUS,

**M**OSES, in my opinion, has given us an history of the Creation, which is by no means reconcileable to the principles of reason. As a good christian, however, I am bound to believe in him as a prophet sent from God, and a law-giver to his chosen people. I would not have you, therefore, imagine that I mean, in the following pages, to dispute the reality of such his deputation from the Almighty. Be assured that I have not imbibed any of those sceptical notions, which are too fashionable  
now

now-a-days with young men at the university. As you are an older divine, I should esteem it as a favour if you would answer some questions which are put, as St. Paul says, only *for the sake of godly edifying.*

◊ We are told by Moses, *that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth : that he was six days in making it, and that on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made, and rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.* It seems, I think, unworthy of the supreme Being to be employed six days in the fabrication of this world. Is it not reducing him too much to the level of humanity, to say that  
he

he finished his work by degrees, and that he considered of it whether it was good or not? It is more agreeable to the notions we have of infinite power, to imagine that he made it in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, for, as the Latin poet says, *vocem Fata sequuntur*. Moses, I think, would have given a more rational history of the creation, if he had represented the Deity making the whole world, as he nobly describes his making light: And God said, *Let there be light, and there was light*.

In the fourteenth verse of the first chapter we are told, *And God said, Let there be lights in the*

F

*firma-*

*firmament of heaven, to divide the day from the night: and let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years. And let them be for lights in the firmament of heaven, to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth. And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. Would not one rather imagine this to be an account of the creation given by an unenlightened writer,*

I than



than a revelation of the Deity, conveyed by the means of inspiration? Are not some of the great truths of natural philosophy, which all the writers on that subject have agreed upon, here contradicted? Can we imagine a revelation from the Deity to be otherwise than altogether true? Moses seems to think that all the expanse above us, which he calls the firmament of heaven, was made for no other purpose than for our use. But who is there now that would not say that the sun was not only made for this earth, but for the planets—that the moon is not a light or luminary, but derives its light entirely from the sun—and that

the stars (the fixt stars I mean) so far from being made for the little service they do us, in regard to light, are suns to other worlds?—Of these truths, however, Moses appears quite ignorant.

We are told also, that there was only one man and one woman created at first.—This, in my opinion, seems improbable; for we must consider what a large space of time would have elapsed before the whole earth could have been replenished from the loins of one man and of one woman. Suppose, for instance, that they were placed in Judea, though they might in no very great time have peopled that country,

country, yet there were no ships to convey their progeny to other parts of the globe; which parts must necessarily have lain uninhabited for several thousands of years. This, then, would have contradicted the general rules of Providence which seem inviolable—Nature, wise and frugal, would have produced somewhat that was not for immediate use—The Deity would have made a world, the greatest part of which, for ages, would have been without an inhabitant.

Thus much for the first chapter: I hope you will particularly attend to these questions I have put, as I have a great desire to have

have them satisfactorily answered. They are not ministred as if I *disbelieved*, but because I am willing to entertain a *rational belief*. This is also what appears strange to me. Though Moses says that Adam and Eve were the two first, and the only two created, and that Cain and Abel were their two first begotten children, yet he makes Cain say unto the Lord: \* *Behold, thou hast driven me out, this day, from the face of the earth: and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and vagabond in the earth: and it shall come to pass that every one that findeth me shall slay me.*

Cain

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\* Genesis, chap. iv. ver. 14.

Cain is afraid that *every one* that findeth him (in an *uninhabited* country) shall slay him. Can this contradiction be evaded by the common cant of divines, by saying the passage is *typical*, *visionary*, or *allegorical*?

In the same book of Genesis we are told, that after Noah and his family had come out from the ark, \* *that he began to be an husbandman, and planted a vineyard: and he drank of the wine and was drunken, and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham the father of Canaan saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren*

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\* Genesis, ch. ix, ver. 20—28.



*brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. Does it not seem unworthy of the Deity to put a prophecy*

prophecy in the mouth of a man, who (in the words of Moses himself) was *drunken*, or, who had just awoke from his wine? Is it not a prophecy that, if fulfilled, would load the Deity with the imputation of cruelty and injustice? Canaan is cursed, and he is also to be punished: for what? —because he saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.

In another part of the same book, Moses says, \* *And the Lord appeared unto him (i. e. Abraham) in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day. And he lift up his eyes and*  
G
*looked,*

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\* Genesis, ch. xviii. ver. 1—16.

looked, and lo, \* three men stood by him : and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground. And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant. Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts ; after that you shall pass on : for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do as thou hast said. And

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\* No less a man than that learned divine, Dr. Lightfoot, has gravely asserted that these three men were the three persons of the Trinity.

*And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetcht a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it. And he took butter and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat. And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent*

G 2

door,

door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, and well stricken in age: and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed will I return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son. Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not: for she was afraid. And he said, Nay, but thou didst laugh.



One cannot tell whether Moses means here, that the great God of heaven and earth, the everlasting Jehovah himself, or that three angels appeared unto Abraham. Does it not seem, however, improbable that the Deity himself would go to Abraham and Sarah, or that he would send three angels to eat with them *three measures of fine meal, when it was kneaded and made cakes upon the hearth?* Could he not have revealed his mind to Abraham, without, at the same time, degrading his dignity?

In the thirty-second chapter of Genesis, is the description of Jacob's wrestling with an angel.  
*And*

\* *And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh: and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. I should be obliged to you to inform me in your next, how this passage is explained by divines, and whether it is to be understood in a literal sense or not; for I do not remember*

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\* Genesis, ch. xxxii. ver. 24, 28, 30.

member to have read any one of them who has attempted an explanation.—Thus much for the first book of Genesis.—In regard to this book, I must acknowledge, that were I to consider of it by itself, and intirely independant of the other parts of the Bible, I should, perhaps, doubt whether the author of it was really inspired, or had a supernatural information. I should think, perhaps, that the Israelites, as well as almost all other nations in the first ages, had gone upon their enterprizes, journeys, and peregrinations; (in the words of the Greek Poet) Πειθόμενοι τεραεσσι Θεῶν, καὶ Ζηνὸς ἀραγῇ; —that they had trusted to the  
inter-

interposition of infinite power, when they had no rational grounds or reason for such a confidence. But when I consider that this book is the foundation, as it were, of the noblest system of morality that was ever given to man, that has no less than God for its author, nay, that was even delivered to the world in person by him; I say, when I consider that it is so connected with this system, that they must stand or fall together, I immediately determine upon belief, and *implicit* belief.—I shall now conclude my questions concerning the Old Testament, with a very few words.

Moses

Moses says, in the seventeenth chapter of Exodus \*, that when the Israelites murmured for water, the Lord commanded him to smite the rock in Horeb, upon which there came water forth. Tacitus, in the † fifth book of his history, gives us a description of his procuring it in another manner. Speaking of the Jews, he says, *Plurimi auctores consentiunt, ortâ per Ægyptum tabe, quæ corpora fœdaret; regem Bocchorim, adito Hammo-*  
H nis

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\* Verse 5, 6.

† I think this book of Tacitus seems incomplete. It is not improbable that some christians in the first centuries, who had more zeal than sense, expunged some other descriptions of the miracles of Moses.



*nis oraculo remedium petentem purgare regnum, & id genus hominum ut invisum Deis, alias in terras avehere jussum. Sic conquisitum collectumque vulgus, postquam vastis locis relictum sit; cæteris per lachrymas torpentibus, Moſen unum exulum monuisse, ne quam Deorum hominumve opem expectarent utrinque deserti, sed sibiſmet ut duci cœleſti crederent, primo cujus auxilio credentes, præſentes miſerias pepuliſſent. Aſſenſere, atque omnium ignari fortuitum iter incipiunt. Sed nihil æque quam inopiâ aquæ fatigabat. Jamque haud procul exitio, totis campis procubuerant: cum grex aſinorum agreſtium, e paſtu in rupem nemore opacam conceſſit.*

*Secutus Moses, conjecturâ herbidi  
soli, largas aquarum venas aperit.  
Id levamen; & continuum sex  
dierum iter emensi, septimo pulsus  
cultoribus, obtinuerunt terras, in  
quibus urbs & templum dicata  
sunt.*

I shall only mention two more  
passages (which are *instar omnium*)  
to shew where Moses seems to  
make the Deity condescend to  
what is unworthy of him—In  
the eighth chapter of Numbers\*,  
we are told; *And the Lord spake  
unto Moses, saying, Speak unto  
Aaron, and say unto him, When  
thou lightest the lamps, the seven*  
H 2 *lamps*

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\* Verse 1—5.

*lamps shall give light over against the candlestick. And Aaron did so; he lighted the lamps thereof over against the candlestick, as the Lord commanded Moses. And this work of the candlestick was of beaten gold, unto the shaft thereof, unto the flowers thereof, was beaten work: according to the pattern which the Lord had shewed Moses.* The other passage that I mean, is in the twenty-second chapter of Numbers\*.—*And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam, and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass,*

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\* Verse 27—31,

*ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in my hand, for now would I kill thee. And the ass said unto Balaam, Am I not thine, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day; was I ever wont to do so unto thee? and he said, Nay. Does not this seem a burlesque upon miracles, that the ass should speak unto Balaam, when the angel of the Lord (out of whose mouth the reprehension would have been more proper) was near at hand? I hope you will give a satisfactory answer*

swer to my questions concerning these two passages, and the several others that I have mentioned. Be assured, however, that I shall not say of them (as is too commonly the case)

———— Credat Judæus Apella ;  
Non ego.

It is impertinent to say that the Old and New Testament are not connected together in a system, as it were, of revelation : or that a man can disbelieve one without disbelieving the other. They are altogether true, or altogether false. To a person as well read as you are in the Scriptures, it is almost unnecessary to say, that our Saviour, St. Paul,  
and



and the other apostles, speak more than once of Moses as the prophet of God; and that they look upon the miracles mentioned in the Old Testament, to be strictly agreeable to truth. To let one example suffice for a thousand.—St. Peter, in his second general epistle, says, \* *Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet.*——  
 In regard to the New Testament,  
 I would

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\* Verse 15—17.

I would beg you for your answers to these questions. Does it not seem improbable that the Son of God himself should be nailed to the cross, and undergo the severest torments for the sins of mankind ; or (if Jesus Christ was not the Son of God) does it not seem unjust that an innocent man should be punished for the transgressions of other men ? The Scripture is, in this case, absolutely contradictory. In one place he is said to be \* equal with God ; in another, that he has

no

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\* Corinthians, *οὐκ ἀρκαῦμον ἡγήσατο εἶναι ἰσθ*  
 Θεῷ—I am well aware of the ingenuity of the Socinians in altering the meaning of a plain passage of Scripture.

no power † without the Father. Is it not unaccountable that tho' he had fed, in a most miraculous manner, several thousands with a little bread and a few fishes, that not one of these should, in the choice given them by Pilate, prefer him to Barabbas; and that no one should manifest at his crucifixion any thought of his being favoured with supernatural assistance, but a poor Centurion, who said, *Truly, this is the Son of God?* Is not the boasted morality of the gospel made up of rules that are impracticable? Can

I

we,

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† Jesus says, Παντα μοι παρενδοθη ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς, μ.β. Mark, ch. xi. ver. 27. Vide ch. x. ver. 18.—There are also many other places where the same meaning is expressed.

we, when we make a feast, ask (instead of our equals) the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind? Are the miracles, which are said to have been performed at the propagation of the gospel, authenticated by any impartial evidence? When St. Paul sojourned at Rome, do we hear, from any Roman author of credit, that he performed any miracles there? If miracles were so frequent at the preaching of the gospel, ought we not to expect some to ensure the continuance of it? Do we hear of any now?—Can any positive meaning be affixed to the prophecies in the Book of Revelations? For instance, in the sixth chapter it is thus said.

*And*

And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts, saying, Come, and see. And I saw, and behold, a white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow, and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering and to conquer. And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come, and see. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon, to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword. And



when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come, and see. And I beheld, and lo, a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine. Will not one exposition or comment upon this passage be as well founded as another?—Again, I must say to you, that I have put these questions for the sake of entertaining a rational belief, and not because I am inclined to infidelity. Lastly, let me ask you if the Christian religion has not been of temporal dis-

diservice to mankind?—Before the propagation of the religion of Jesus, the world enjoyed the charming sweets of universal toleration. No Pagan hated Pagan (in their good-tempered religion) because he worshipped other gods; or his own in a different manner from himself. In the course of thousands of years, no man, except Socrates, amongst the Athenians, suffered death, or even punishment, for the sake of his religious opinions. It was then that meek-ey'd Toleration, as gentle as the dove, sat enthroned upon the benevolent hearts of mankind. But when the gospel of Christ

3 began

began to be published to the  
 world, that sweet tranquillity  
 vanished in a moment.—That  
 gospel (in the words of its great  
 author) set brother against bro-  
 ther, and nation against nation  
 —That gospel appeared as de-  
 structive to the race of man, as  
 war, pestilence, and famine.  
 The time would fail me to speak  
 of the mischief it has occasioned  
 in later days—of the merciless  
 tribunals of the bloody duke of  
 Alva, for the punishment of he-  
 reticks in the Low Countries—of  
 the massacre of the protestants in  
 Ireland—of the cruel treatment  
 of the hugonots in France—of  
 the horrid persecution there under  
 Lewis the fourteenth.—In short,  
 all

all the parts of Europe were deluged with the blood of unhappy heretics.—The demon of discord seemed to reign triumphant over this whole quarter of the globe—Persecution, which christianity produced, though not so proud and elate here as in many other parts, yet even here flew like a rapacious Vulture—here gorged her hideous maw—here raised aloft her towering crest, and joyously clapt her *crimson wings*.

I am your's, &c.

ACADEMICUS.

P. S. On account of some unforeseen accidents, I have not  
been

been able to get ready my remarks on the Phædon of Plato. I hope, however, very soon to give you my reasons for doubting the *natural* immortality of the soul, against the arguments of that poetical philosopher, who (in the words of one of the greatest genius's this kingdom ever produced) has *built mere systems of imagination, and corrupted the true springs of knowledge.*

FINIS.





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